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Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Missionaries fired over faith statement

FRAMINGHAM, Mass. (BP, ABP, and local reports) — Trustees of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB), meeting May 6-8 in Framingham, Mass., terminated the service of 13 missionaries who refused to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) by the May 5 deadline set by IMB President Jerry Rankin.

The board also accepted the resignations of 20 workers who cited the faith statement of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as a factor in their decision to resign. In addition, 10 other missionaries chose to take early retirement with full benefits instead of affirming the BFM. The board is not releasing names of any of the missionaries involved.

"We regret that any of our missionaries have chosen to resign rather than affirm the faith statement, but we feel it is time to move forward and keep our focus on sharing Christ with a lost world," Rankin said. "We do not want anything to deter us from moving steadfastly toward completing the unfinished task of fulfilling the Great Commission."

Nearly 99% of Southern Baptists' 5,500 overseas missionaries have affirmed the 2000 BFM. The primary conflict cited by missionaries who did not affirm the document was a feeling that signing an affirmation

to any faith statement amounts to affirming a creed — something historically anathema to many Baptists. In addition, some of the missionaries who resigned or were terminated expressed strong disagreement with particular sections of the revised document that they said prevented them from affirming it.

Rankin and other missions leaders, however, have insisted the signing is necessary to assure Southern Baptists their missionaries are working within boundaries set by the convention. Rankin in the past has referred to unnamed persons who were questioning the integrity of the convention's missionary corps.

Southern Baptists have always expected missionary beliefs to reflect the beliefs of the churches that send and support them, Rankin said. All missionaries on the field made a similar affirmation of earlier versions of BFM when they were appointed.

IMB officials have pointed out that the affirmation process allows a worker to note

minor disagreements based on the Bible and continue to serve, as long as the missionary promises to work in accordance with and not contrary to the faith statement

"We are grateful that these missionary personnel currently serving and sent out in the last two years have readily endorsed the SBC confession of faith," Rankin said. "It is not appropriate to expect Southern Baptists to support those who are not willing to work in accord with what the denomination confesses to believe. To do

overseas missionaries who had not yet affirmed the BFM to make their decisions by May 5. He appealed to the workers to either promise to work in harmony with the faith statement or tender their resignations by that date.

A final tabulation by IMB has listed 34 other missionaries who resigned during 2002 and cited the BFM as a factor in their decision. As of this month's meeting, the total number of missionaries refusing to affirm the faith statement stands at 77.

The IMB has 5,500 missionaries serving among 1,497 people groups around the world. Missionary attrition was not significantly higher than usual in 2002, though some observers predicted an exodus of missionaries over BFM issue. The attrition rate in 2002 was 5.2%, only .1% higher than 2001 and squarely in the middle of the range since 2000.

Retired pastor Frank Gunn of Biloxi, who is completing his second term as an IMB trustee, said after the meeting that when he researched the BFM issue, "I was amazed when I discovered that missionary candidates were required to affirm a doctrinal statement which revealed that their beliefs were consistent with the generally held doctrines of the Southern Baptist Convention, even back in the 19th century."

"Since 1970, under the leadership of (Foreign Mission Board Presidents) Baker James Cauthen and Keith Parks, every missionary appointed by the Foreign Mission Board signed a statement that he or she had read and was in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message."

Gunn pointed out the board's decision in Framingham was unanimous regarding the missionaries who declined to sign the BFM affirmation.

"I have had the privilege of seeing phenomenal growth during my time as a trustee. In spite of the bumps along the way, God continues to call and people are responding in record numbers to overseas missions."

"Our challenge is to provide the funding necessary to get these God-called people to the fields of service," he said.

Wayne Marshall, pastor of Longview Heights Church, Olive Branch, also serves as an IMB trustee but could not be reached for comment by publication deadline.

so would undercut the credibility and confidence in the IMB as a denominational mission entity serving Southern Baptists."

Although IMB trustees initially agreed on the record that missionaries would not be required to sign the 2000 BFM, they have continued to roundly endorse Rankin's request. "This is not a one-man decision," Bob Claytor, chairman of the board of trustees, said. "The SBC family has been in strong agreement concerning our statement of faith. Our board reflects that agreement and 99% of our missionaries are also in strong agreement."

Missionaries were first asked by Rankin through a letter to reaffirm the BFM in January 2002. In the letter, Rankin said that affirming the current statement would help the agency "move beyond a continuing and potentially damaging issue that could distract us from our mission task, unnecessarily create suspicion on the part of some and erode the support of you and the IMB."

In April of this year, Rankin asked all

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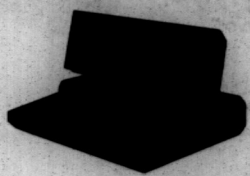
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The Baptists are coming!

Christians in general, and Baptists in particular, seem to be a never-ending source of amazement, amusement, and fear to the self-congratulating intelligentsia of this world — you know, the people who believe they are superior in every way to the rest of us and therefore entitled to tell us how we should think and live. A few examples:

- Abortion is a constitutional right that involves nothing more than the simple removal of undesired "products of conception" from the uterus of a woman. If you believe otherwise, you must be a dangerous, dirt-eating religious fundamentalist (and probably from the South, to make it even worse).

- It is permissible for ill-informed Hollywood stars on the radical left to speak out on issues of national importance, but to challenge those stars with the facts is not permissible and an undeniable sign of your low social caste. After all, big Hollywood stars are to be worshipped, not questioned.

- Society is to blame for sociopathic thugs who drop out of school in the fifth grade to begin their careers of maiming and killing innocent people. Your protests that you are not responsible for someone else's bad choices merely spotlights the fact that you didn't get accepted to the right schools.

The elitists don't put a whole lot of stock in you and me out here in Flyover Country. We're always quoting the Bible. We're always calling sin what it is. We're always wanting to pray at high school graduations and the like. We're always answering our Savior's call to serve mankind and spread the Gospel.

It's that last point that really seems to get to them. They don't want the Gospel in their lives or the lives of anyone else, even if it means some unimportant people have to starve to death in the process.

How else to explain the near-universal revulsion among elitists to Southern Baptists' plans to help feed hungry Iraqis? They have used grave undertones to question our

motives for shipping food en masse over the next several weeks to that impoverished country. They have accused us of plotting to manipulate Iraqi Muslims into becoming Christians with our food donations. They have publicly compared us to the Crusaders of the distant past.

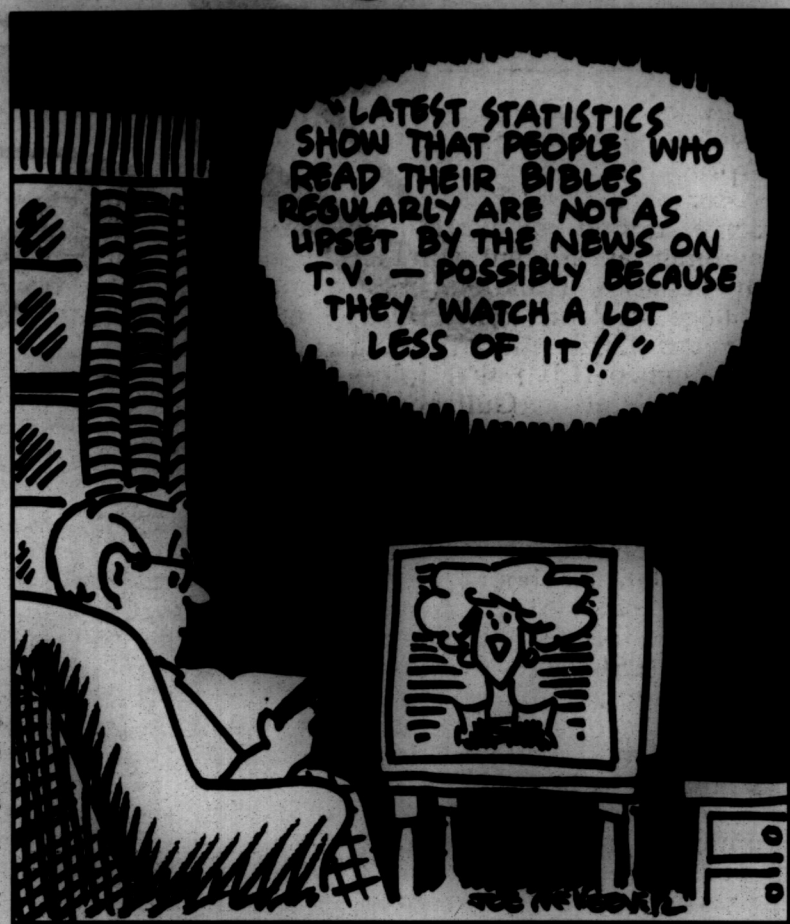
"Pushing a provocative religious message on a wary, war-torn nation could inflame the world," wrote Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Jane R. Eisner. The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post have likewise questioned the wisdom of allowing those pesky Christians into Iraq with their message of eternal salvation.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram columnist Molly Ivins, who has been known to profane God on national television, gave religious groups her Worst Idea of the Month award for their Iraq efforts.

"Fundamentalist Christian missionaries are now salivating over the prospect of going to Iraq to convert the hapless heathen," she wrote, going on to compare such groups to a venereal disease.

"The Southern Baptists are poised to deploy en masse, reminding us of Texas newspaperman William Brann's famous comment, 'The trouble with our Texas Baptists is that we do not hold them under the water long enough,'" she wrote.

Such venomous expressions of opposition to Baptist relief efforts have been delivered far and wide, even though the accusations of rampant proselytizing are lies. "The doors to Iraq are opening slowly but they are opening," according to an unidentified International Mission Board worker who recently addressed that orga-

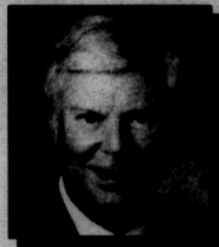


nization's board of trustees. "The opportunities may be opening single file, but God had blessed us. We are beginning with compassion. Unlike what some are saying, we are giving with no strings attached."

Those facts won't appear on the pages of many secular newspapers or the airwaves of many broadcasters. That's because it doesn't fit elitists' preconceived notions of who we are and why we do what we do. As the old saying goes, some reporters won't let truth stand in the way of a good story.

In the meantime, we'll just keep going wherever the Lord sends us, and doing whatever he directs us to do. That's the way it always has been, that's the way it always will be, and — most importantly — that's the way it should be.

GUEST OPINION:



It's not all about us

By J. Robert White
Executive Director-Treasurer
Georgia Baptist Convention

So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth," 1 Cor. 3:7 states (HCSB).

We find ourselves in such an age of me-ism that even Christians struggle with the idea that the world is "all about me." It's the idea that I should have my way. I should be the one who gets recognized. I should be in charge of the world!

In the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul found himself in the middle of a huge controversy. Members of the church had chosen sides and adopted leaders for the two sides, namely Paul and Apollos. Paul has just finished calling the Christians at Corinth spiritual babies. He remarks that there is envy and strife among them as some have declared themselves to be followers of Paul, and others followers of Apollos.

Paul brings the church back to reality by reminding them that Paul and Apollos are merely servants of the Lord who are fulfilling their responsibilities of Christian service. Paul was the planter and Apollos was the one who watered. Then Paul declares that God is the one who gives the growth.

Resoundingly Paul trumpets the truth in verse 7: "I am nothing and Apollos is nothing. God is everything! He is the one who brings the growth!"

It might be wise for every minister and every layperson to daily read these words and be reminded who is in charge.

We are nothing, and God is everything. This work of the church is not about me; it's all about God and His Kingdom. My focus should be upon serving King Jesus. In order to do this successfully, I am going to have to get myself off the throne so that Christ may be glorified.

For me this is as fresh as today's experience. I had preached what I felt was a strong message. People expressed their appreciation and commended my preaching.

On the way home I was thinking to myself, "You really nailed that message this morning. You should feel good about that." Then all at once God spoke to my heart. I stopped my direction of self-serving thought and said, "Okay, how well do you think you would do if the Lord took His hand off of you for one moment? Don't ever forget that any success you have in the pulpit is not due to your ability to proclaim, but God's ability to bless in ways that are beyond comprehension." If there is any gold in this poor stammering tongue, it comes from God.

How can I be a Kingdom person unless my attitude is a Kingdom attitude? My primary aim must be to build God's Kingdom instead of my own. I was attending an evange-

lism conference in Alabama years ago when the preacher said, "Some of you folks talk a lot about what has happened in your church since you got there. What you need to do is go back to your previous churches and see what God has done since you left." None of us is indispensable. We serve at the pleasure of our Master and He should get the glory, not us.

I believe that John the Baptist had this issue of attitude figured out just right. When John's disciples saw everyone leaving their side to follow after Jesus, they asked John how he felt about it. John responded by saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" John 3:30. That's what I'm talking about. That is a Kingdom mentality. It's not all about me; it's about our Lord, Jesus Christ. When we get that straight in our hearts and minds, then we will be able to get down to Kingdom business. We just might see the great revival we have been praying for.

White is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Empowering Kingdom Growth Task Force. Commentary courtesy of Baptist Press.

BSU summer missionaries commissioned

By Erica Harms
Correspondent

A total of 128 college students who were commissioned April 4-6 at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian will serve around the world this summer as student summer missionaries. Hundreds more college students joined them for the Leadership Training Conference (LTC) that followed at Gulfshore Assembly, focusing on preparing newly elected campus leaders for their upcoming ministries.

"We don't have a purpose as leaders without Jesus Christ," said Alan Oliver, 2003-04 Baptist Student Union (BSU) president at Mississippi College in Clinton. "Without a vision from Him, our jobs are pointless."

Tim Elmore of EQUIP ministries in Atlanta was the speaker for the weekend. Focusing on living a purpose-driven life, he encouraged students to understand their leadership style and "capture a God-sized vision."

The BSU praise team from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg and the drama team from William Carey College in Hattiesburg also helped to lead worship.

"I sensed God in that place when we were worshipping. I can already see Him working to prepare my heart for what I'm going to experience this summer," said William Carey College student Dianna Dill, who will serve as a student summer missionary to California.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the commission-

ing of the BSU summer missionaries who will serve throughout the United States and around the world.

These students began the process of applying for summer missions in October of last year. After filling out applications, they went through a local and state interview before being assigned to their summer destinations.



PRAYING FOR FELLOW MISSIONARIES — College students from across the state attending the Leadership Training Conference (LTC) April 4-6 at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian pray for their fellow students missionaries that will be on the mission field throughout the summer of 2003. (BR photo by Erica Harms)

"I can't help but think that God is smiling," said Michael Ball, BSU director at Mississippi State University in Starkville, after the 2003 summer missionaries were recognized.

Elmore challenged the students as well as the friends and family gathered in their support to serve the Lord regardless of their location.

"Missionaries don't have to cross the street; they just have to see the cross," he said.

The missionaries attended an orientation prior to LTC, where they were able to meet their partners and receive some information on their job descriptions.

"I'd board the plane right now if I could. This weekend made me really excited," said Lauren

other state in the Southeast.

Mississippi is also the state with the most missions funding per capita, with almost 50% of all money given in support of the summer missions program having been given in the past 10 years.

Today, Mississippi has 34 collegiate BSU programs and continues funding students to serve the cause of Christ all over the world.

"Our school has worked all year to raise money for summer missions. Both our creative arts teams and fundraisers bring in money that help send students like me around the world," said Mississippi College student Holly Roberts, 2003 student summer missionary to Taiwan.

The LTC served as a chance

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for both BSU summer missionaries and new campus leaders to learn about effective ministry and encourage one another.

"We help each other grow. We're going to have to be so flexible this summer, so we desire all the prayer and encouragement we can get," said Mississippi State University student Forrest Moss, summer missionary to Idaho.

The BSU summer missions program is supported by funds raised by the students themselves and by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

For more information about BSU summer missions, contact Weaver McCracken in the Collegiate Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3302 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 302. E-mail: wmccracken@mbcb.org.

Looking back

10 years ago

More than a decade of denominational conflict and "disruptive changes" at some Southern Baptist Convention institutions are making donors wary of investing their money in those institutions, according to Russel Dilday, president of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

20 years ago

Paula Smith accepts the position of minister of education and youth at First Church, Flowood. She comes to the position from North Carrollton Church. (Editor's note: Smith currently serves as a consultant for the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union.)

50 years ago

Remains of some 70 Biblical scrolls believed to be 2,000 or more years old are found in a cave on the shore of the Dead Sea about 25 miles east of Jerusalem. The discovery by Arab shepherds is proclaimed by one archaeologist as being "perhaps the most sensational archaeological event of our time."

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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AUAM XOA

LYSOXAPETMATT

PV SPW ROYJO YT KD

VNYXO PV BATET JOLYTX

EMXP NQQ NMW EGPM

NQQ XOAH XONX

KAQYUA: VPL XOALA

YTMP WYVVALAMJA.

LPHNMT XOLAA:

XRAMXD - XRP

Clue: H=M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 8:17

ANOTHER OPEN LETTER?

After writing an open letter to Wesley Britt, (the outstanding young football player from the University of Alabama who was chosen, yet declined, to be a Playboy All-American), I was asked by numerous folks if I was going to write a letter to the chosen, then self-disgraced, rejected, and dejected coach of the University of Alabama football team, Mike Price. This man, who had been hired from his exalted coaching position in Washington and accepted the leadership mantle of the great Tide tradition, was caught in a swirl of accusations, rumors, and then confirmations about his conduct involving everything from his heavy drinking to cavorting with strippers. As a result, he was fired by President Witt of the University of Alabama.

To be honest, I thought about and even started to write such a follow-up letter, but two things prevented me. For one thing, there just was not enough space for me to cover all the issues involved, and secondly, there were other people related to the incident to whom I would have preferred writing. Just think about all the folks involved in this incident. Sure, I would have liked to have written to Mr. Price and expressed to him how disappointing it is to see someone in his leadership role, with all of its possibilities and perks, squander it all with such immoral, loose, and thoughtless behavior. I would have addressed the issue of the greater responsibility that comes with a leadership role.

Now, while I heard some people expressing, "Well, he's just a man like any other man," I believe there is an accountability factor that comes with the acceptance of leadership that requires higher standards to be maintained. Regardless of the fact that our national mentality has been somewhat conditioned by years of a presidency where the thinking was that it doesn't matter what a guy does in his private life or concerning his ethics as long as he performs well in the job —



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

I believe that is warped and distorted thinking. Also, though space would not allow me to address it, I would have liked to have said a few words about the disappointment that he has dished out to all of his family members. I would also have liked to have said a few words about the senselessness of losing a 10 million dollar contract, to say nothing of the frustration, pain, and sadness he inflicted on a group of young men and an entire football program that was depending on him.

Honestly, I did not want to write Mike Price because I would have preferred to write an open letter to President Witt of the University of Alabama. This man is a leader! From everything I can discover, President Witt got the information, sorted out the facts, contemplated the issues (both short and long range), and arrived at a decision simply to do the right thing.

While everyone who has been a part of the discussion, whether Alabama alumni, former players and coaches, or present day trustees of the school, did not agree (in fact, some people say that the opinion polls were split 50/50), President Witt did what needed to be done! The other reason I wanted to write him was because this man was hired by the school to come and lead after Mike Price had been asked to come and be the football coach, and for anybody who has any understanding at all about college football, especially Alabama football, you know the sport is KING! Sure, it is a university and that implies that teaching and learning, academics and intellectual excellence, are supposed to be at the forefront. While Alabama has pro-

duced some great scholars, they have produced more great football players.

In this case, the president could have been building his own gallows. In his announcement he was fair, honest, forthright, and compassionate, yet he did what was best! Period! His options were many: he could have listened carefully to public opinion polls (everyone was giving an opinion); he could have asked the movers and shakers that have the greatest influence on the athletic program and followed their guidance; or, he could have turned to the trustees and placed it in their lap.

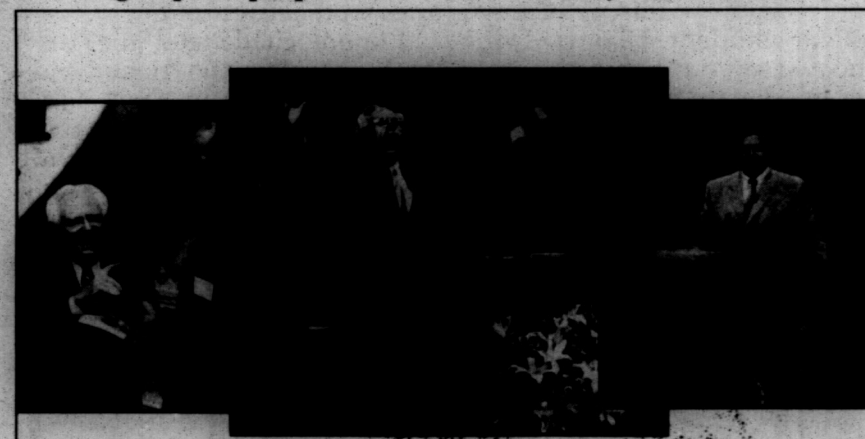
While I am confident that he listened to what people had to say, he said the thing that must be done. Not everyone agreed with him. Some were very outspoken against him. In my opinion, he courageously and thoughtfully did the right thing. It was the right thing for the football program. It was the right thing for the players. It was the right thing for the university. It was the right thing for the Southeastern Conference. It was the right thing for our moral, ethical thinking as a nation. It was the right thing for other coaches. It was simply the right thing!

Then, as I thought more about writing a letter, I realized there was a group of people that I

wanted to address even more than the coach or the president and that was all of the people who quietly, and in this instance, innocently, could only sit by and suffer. Those people are the coaches who had quit their jobs to come and work with Mike Price; his family and especially his two sons who are in the coaching group; and, then, his wife in particular who has to be hurt, embarrassed, and afraid. Those people also include the young people who have played for him in the past and the young men who were pinning their future hopes on his abilities, as well as the student body and alumni of the university.

Another one of the groups that I would have liked to have written to, in a kind of open-letter format, would be the coaches at every level throughout America who are trying to do the right thing — trying to uphold high standards, living their lives in an exemplary way to influence the lives of young people in the most positive manner. I know that they are out there and I know many of them by name and face, and have watched them as they have stayed the course and made a difference. To all of them, I want to say "Thank you!" Thank you to all the coaches I had the privilege of playing under — men who worked hard, instructed with intensity, but did so without being foul-mouthed or vile. They touched me and I am grateful!

So, to all of those that I will not have time to say everything I would like to, I send you these words and hope that all of us will contemplate and comprehend the enormity of our actions.



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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

May 15, 2003

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

Discipleship Resource Showcase

May 22, 2003

First Baptist Church, Gulfport

7-9 p.m.

Info locally: Dionne Williams, 228-832-4311

For more information, please call the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department at 1-800-748-1651.



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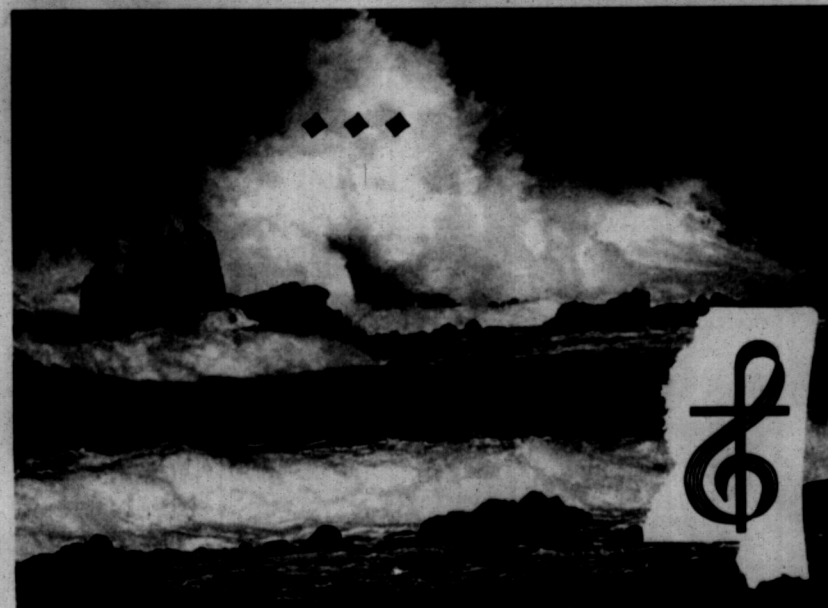
Lord, you

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Gulfshore Baptist Assembly, July 10-12, 2003

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- For program information, contact the Church Music Department at 601-292-3267 or 1-800-748-1651.
- For registration information, contact Gulfshore Baptist Assembly.



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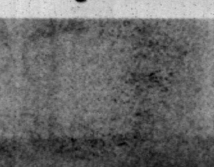
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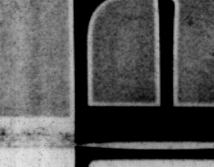
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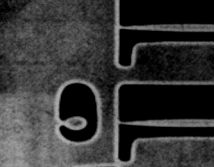
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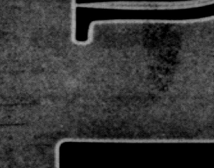
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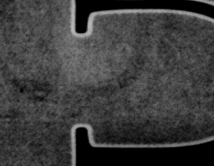
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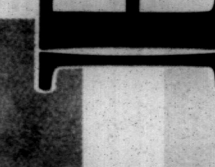
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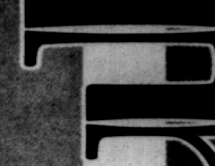
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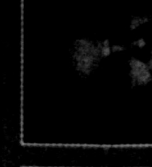
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Holly Kay Roberts
Mississippi College
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Will Sahin
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Stephanie Sage
Mississippi College
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"We wish to pray in the Spirit and at the same time walk after the flesh. This is impossible."

Andrew Murray

For: (1) Associational Week of Prayer, 18th - 24th (WMU); (2) She came to church for the first time a few Sundays ago in the Dominican Republic at the end of the service, she walked to the front to give her testimony; "I have never encountered such love as I did this week. I now have something to look forward to with my new faith in Jesus Christ."

Please pray for S., a pastor's wife in Cebu City, Philippines, who was diagnosed with polymyositis and scleroderma last year. She was in remission for a few months, but since February she has been out of remission, with more muscles being affected. She and her husband, Pastor F, have two sons, ages 13 and 2.

In China today, in spite of many house church leaders being arrested and beaten and imprisoned, Christian churches are growing at a rate of more than 20,000 new believers each day. However, don't forget to intercede for those who suffer at the hands of atheistic officials.

For: (1) II Senior Adult Conference, Gulfshore, 19th - 21st (D&FM); (2) Pray for R. and M., Margarita Island, Venezuela, who accepted Christ and are being discipled. They talk about the day they gave their hearts to Jesus and found what they had been searching for all those years. Pray for the professionals on Margarita.

For: (1) Memorial Day; (2) I Youth Conference, Gulfshore, 26th - 30th (MBCB); (2) GA Camp Staff Orientation, Camp Garaywa, Clinton, 26th - 30th (WMU); (3) Pray for a large printing of scriptures being planned for the North of Iraq, that it would reach people ready to receive the Good News.

For: (1) Children's Mission Camp, Central Hills, Kosciusko, 3 p.m., 2nd - 1 p.m., 4th (MM); (2) GA Camp, Camp Garaywa, Clinton, 2nd - 6th (WMU); (3) Please pray today for Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada.

Pray for the 26 students of Chad who completed the final level of English studies (using the New Testament). They are all Muslims and some are very open. They have heard the message and now need the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and hearts to accept it. Also pray for four women who are studying with a believer at the same level.

For: (1) Basketball Camp, Central Hills, Kosciusko, 27th - 30th (MM); (2) Pray for one of the ladies in Karonga Baptist Church in Malawi who feeds around 60 orphans at her home each Saturday morning. Pray that this time each week would minister to these children in a wonderful way.

For: (1) III Youth Conference, Gulfshore, 3rd - 7th (MBCB); (2) Pray that the Word of God being taught in English as a foreign language class with Chinese in Western South America will penetrate the hearts of the students who are not yet believers.

There is concern in the north of Iraq over political tension between Iraq and Turkey. A door is now opening for the Kurds of Iraq to hear the Good News. Pray that political tensions in the north will not hinder the gospel from reaching the Kurds.

For: (1) Summer Missionaries' Orientation, 28th - 30th (MM); (2) Naompolola Baptist Church, Zambia, has had its times of hardships, but pray that the training and revival services taking place will give the church. These Zambian brothers and sisters need encouragement to be a light in the darkness of their culture.

For: Baptist Building AT HOME DAYS, 4th - 6th; (2) Pray that fear will not hinder any volunteer's commitment to join a gateway city team in France in distributing French/Arabic New Testaments. Pray for more volunteers.

For: (1) III Senior Adult Conference, Gulfshore 22nd - 24th (D&FM); (2) Bert McQueen is a chaplain/director of the Alaska Police Ministries. Their program provides chaplain services throughout Alaska and is growing so rapidly that they need more chaplains. Pray for the chaplains as they show God's love in traumatic situations.

Personal encounters with Christ! This concept is completely foreign to the Mandinka of West Africa. They do not believe God is able, let alone desirous, of having a personal relationship with man. Pray for the mind, heart and spirit of the Mandinka to be awakened to the reality of Jesus Christ.

Praise the Lord! The Nigerian Baptist Convention already has 10 to 15 home personnel scattered throughout their country in an effort to reach the most unreached peoples of Nigeria. They have a few NBC foreign personnel and hope to have more in the near future.

For: (1) Associational Leadership Training, Camp Garaywa, Clinton, 16th - 17th, (WMU); (2) Flor Morales is the Hispanic church planter for the York Association, Rock Hill, SC. Pray that they can start four new Hispanic churches in York during 2003, for leaders for these churches, and for growth in Hispanic churches.

Baseball has become a well-used tool for evangelism in Uruguay. Missionary Cliff Case writes: "Pray that God will use the many opportunities of working with these young people and the testimonies which will be given during the tournament to lead many to the Lord."

For: (1) Collegiate Mission Trip 23rd - 26th (WMU); (2) Sisters Who Care Women's Retreat Maryland/Delaware 23rd - 26th (WMU); (3) Economic conditions in Uruguay have become very difficult. Pray especially for bivocational pastors, as it is very difficult for them to find jobs to support their families while they serve in small interior churches.

For: (1) 11 Youth Conference; Gulfshore 30th - June 3rd (MBCB); (2) Pray that a cure can be found for the SARS virus. Pray for all the people who have been affected by it, including health workers returning to the U.S. and teachers planning to go to China this summer.

For: (1) Single Adult Conference, Gulfshore 24th - 26th (D&FM); (2) A leader of a world religion in Las Cabanas, Ecuador is making accusations that evangelists are of the devil and those who accept the gospel will go to hell. Pray that God would reveal the truth and give them the courage to listen accept the gospel message.

A high-ranking government official of the Dominican Republic called a meeting with workers of all Christian denominations, in which he requested prayer for the country and its leaders. He stated that the biggest problem in the country is not poverty, but sin. Pray that workers there take advantage of this open door to spread the gospel.

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HOUSE TOPS.

Homecomings & Revivals

Pine Forest, Collinsville: May 25; 100th anniversary; dedication, 11 a.m.; dinner on the grounds following; afternoon service, 1:30 p.m.; Taylor Wallace, preaching; Andy May, pastor.

First Pecan Grove, Ellisville: May 18; worship, 11 a.m.; Mark Gervais, preaching; Legacy of Faith, music.

First Pecan Grove, Ellisville: May 19-21; Mon.-Wed., 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Plainway, Laurel: May 23-25; Fri. and Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Bud Swindall, evangelist; Nonnie Jefcoat, pastor.

Spring Creek, Philadelphia: May 18; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner on the grounds following; afternoon singing; Alton Byrd, former pastor, speaking; Wayne King, pastor.

Bethel, Monticello: June 8; Sunday School 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch at noon; Paul Smith, Mandeville, La., speaking; W. R. "Bill" Miller, pastor.

Trinity, Pearl: May 25; Old Fashioned Day; a covered dish lunch will be served; Jerry Rawls, New Life, McLain, speaking; Don Goff, New Life, McLain, music.

Bellevue, Oxford: May 18; worship, 11 a.m.; dinner at noon, afternoon singing; Lee Graham, speaking; Winston Ross, interim pastor.

Tylertown, Tylertown: May 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; James Spencer, Hernando, Hernando, evangelist; Graham Smith, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; Michael W. Glenn, pastor.

New Harmony, Philadelphia: May 18; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch will follow; Danny Dodds, preaching; all are welcome.

Corinth, Purvis: May 25; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:20 a.m.; New Life Quartet, 11:30 a.m.; covered dish lunch, 12:15 a.m.; David Strebeck, pastor.

Mt. Horeb, Collins: June 1; worship, 10 a.m.; a covered dish lunch will be served; Joe Vernon, preaching; Mike Lott, music; John Reid, pastor.

Causeyville, Meridian: May 18; worship, 11 a.m.; a covered dish lunch will follow; Ron Mercer, former pastor, preaching; Ernest Allen, pastor.

College News

Approximately 517 students will receive degrees at three **William Carey College (WCC)**, Hattiesburg, commencement exercises to be held on May 16 at 7 p.m. and May 17 at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the Dumas Smith Auditorium, Thomas Fine Arts Building. James Hutto, Superintendent of the Petal School District, will speak at the graduate ceremony on Friday. United States Senator Thad Cochran will speak at the Arts, Humanities and Sciences undergraduate ceremony at 9:30 Saturday. BancorpSouth President Joseph Dwight Dyess will speak at the second undergraduate ceremony at 1 p.m. Saturday. Cloyd Ezell will present candidates and Larry Kennedy, president, will confer degrees.

Students will receive degrees at the **William Carey College (WCC)** Coast campus commencement held on May 17 at 4:30 p.m. at First Church, Gulfport. The commencement speaker will be Argile Smith, professor of preaching and chair of the division of pastoral ministries at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Cloyd Ezell will present candidates and Larry Kennedy, president, will confer degrees.

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STAFF CHANGES

First Church, Newton, called David Williamson as Minister of Students on April 14. Williamson attended Southwestern Seminary.

Kreole Ave. Church, Moss Point, has called Don Womble as pastor.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Antioch Church, Columbus, will hold Vacation Bible School, Exploring the Miracles of Jesus, on June 2-6 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

First Church of McLaurin, Hattiesburg, will hold Vacation Bible School on June 2-6 from 6-9 p.m.

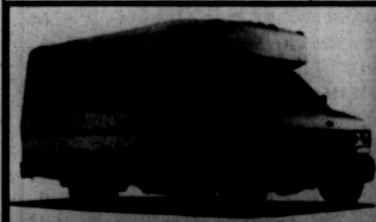
The city of Florence is sponsoring **Ninth Hour** in concert at Hemphill Park on May 17 at 6 p.m. Clear Branch Church, Florence, will sponsor additional activities after the concert. For more information and tickets, call (601) 845-6688.

Center Terrace Church, Canton, will present By His Grace in concert for the Grobogan people of Indonesia on May 24 at 7 p.m. The concert is sponsored by the WMU. A love offering will be taken.

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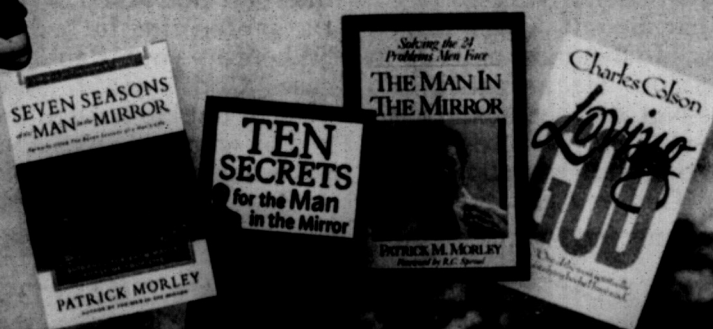
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Giving Unselfishly to God's Work

Acts 4:32-5:11

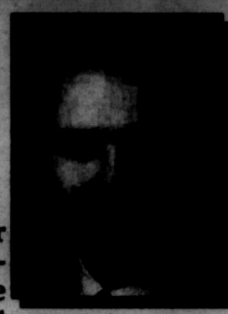
By John Clendinning

How much is enough? In the world of greed and selfishness, there is never enough. When asked how much money the corporate baron wants to have, his answer is "just a little bit more." We see this attitude in children as well. It seems that some of the first phrases they learn to say are "no," "gimme" and "mine." There may be two children playing in the same room. One is surrounded by toys, the other content to play with a singular item. Yet, the first is determined to take away the child's only toy. How many toys are enough? Just a little bit more.

Likewise, this selfish attitude is one of the leading causes of divorce in our nation. Many couples have formed their own Golden Rule saying, "Get all I can while I can." Their

object of desire is their own personal satisfaction, not meeting the needs of others. Yet God has called His children to a peculiar lifestyle in which it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

This week's lesson focuses on the early church and their attitude toward giving, and the lessons that families can learn from this passage. After the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the early church experienced phenomenal growth, and yet "all the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:44-45, 47b). As the focal passage begins, the Holy Spirit is continuing to move in the lives of the early Christians.



Clendinning

The early church has a common goal in their love for the resurrected Christ. This love spilled over to each other and the community as they willingly gave to support each other. In addition, the Scripture mentions that there were no needy persons among them. The people were even willing to sell some of their own possessions if it meant a ministry to others. One in particular was Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement". Here he is also called Joseph. The Scripture accounts that Barnabas sold a field he owned and gave the proceeds to the apostles. The image of bringing the money and laying it at the apostles' feet paints a picture of submission, not submission to the apostles, but to Christ whom they represented. This kind of generosity cannot be coerced. It comes from a soul who has been touched by ultimate love.

However, not all share the same giving spirit. Acts 5 opens with the account of Ananias and his wife

Sapphira, who, like Barnabas, also sold a piece of property. However, the couple conspired to keep back some of the proceeds, while only offering a portion to the apostles. The greater sin is one of duplicity - saying they had given all while holding back a portion of the proceeds. In attempting to deceive the community of faith and gain a reputation for greater generosity than they actually had shown, Ananias and Sapphira really tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. The Greek expression of this deception can literally be translated "falsified the Holy Spirit."

There can be deadly consequences to lying to God. When confronted by Peter, the Scripture tells us that Ananias died immediately. Society today attempts to minimize the consequences of sin. However, the passage clearly reflects the reality of divine judgment. Peter had given the couple an opportunity to repent, and give an honest account. When Sapphira confirmed the lie, she, too, died immediately.

An overemphasis on material possessions can be detrimental not only to individuals, but churches as well. Whenever individuals in the church dwell on material possessions, the focus is automatically inward. When the focus is on giving, a natural outcome is to look outwardly. A shift occurs when families and churches take their eyes off of themselves, and develops a vision for the world around them. God has called His children to a life of unselfish giving, in our families and in our churches.

On writing on the true secret of happiness, Natasha Josefowitz wrote: "Every day have something to do or somewhere to go. Every day have someone to call, someone to see, someone to love. But most important, every day have something to give to someone." God is pleased when believers show generosity to others.

John Clendinning is the husband of Lori and wrote this lesson in her absence. Clendinning is member of First Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Trust God in Times of Defeat

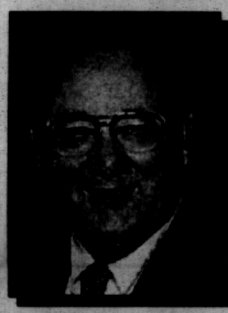
I Kings 19:1-6, 9b-10, 15-18

By Harold Simmons

Introduction: The people of England were awaiting word of the outcome of the battle between Wellington and Napoleon. Finally, a message was being flashed from the Continent side of the English Channel to England. Each letter was flashed: W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D... Then a very thick fog rolled across the channel. The English were downcast, but the fog cleared and the whole message came through: Wellington Defeated Napoleon. Elijah thought he was defeated by Jezebel, but he did not have the whole message that God would give him. He was depressed and exhausted, and this he confessed to the Lord. The Lord gave Elijah just what he needed — renewal.

Depression (I Kings 19:1-4). There had been an overwhelm-

ing victory on Mt. Carmel. The prophets of Baal were dead. Ahab told Jezebel what had happened and instead of causing her to turn from Baal, it seemed to strengthen her resolve to make Baal the religion of the land. The first thing she did was to take an oath to kill Elijah within the next 24 hours and then sent a messenger to Elijah to tell him of her plans. The message caused Elijah to put on his "hurry up" shoes and head south. Elijah walked from Jezebel in the Northern Kingdom to the southernmost part of the Southern Kingdom, a distance of a 100 miles. There at Beersheba Elijah left his servant. I think there maybe two reasons for his action. First, If Jezebel caught Elijah, she would probably would also kill the servant (helper) of Elijah. Secondly, Elijah thought his ministry and life would soon be over and he



Simmons

would have no need for a servant.

Elijah did not stop running at 100 miles. He added another 20-25 miles by going farther into the Desert of Zin. He found a broom tree which is a desert bush that grows about 12 feet tall. Elijah repeated the words that many depressed people say out of the depths of their hurt: "I want to die." Most Christians can identify with the feelings that Elijah had at this time. Depression doesn't care who we are or the commitment that we have made to the Lord, but God has not had His last word for Elijah or for us when depression comes.

Exhaustion (I Kings 19:5-6). Elijah did what most of us do in depression. He retreated into sleep. Not only because of his depression but because he was very tired after walking 125 miles. God sent a ministering

angel to "touch him" awake. After Elijah roused from sleep, he heard a most welcome message. "Get up and eat." Why was that so important? Dying men have no need of food because they are about to die. After eating and a refreshing drink, Elijah again lay down to sleep.

God always nourishes us and gives us refreshment when we need it. He "restores our soul." He restores to us that inner feeling again when we need it most. We don't feel empty anymore.

Confession (I Kings 19:9b-10). God asked Elijah to tell Him exactly how he felt. The question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" is an echo of the question God asked of Adam in the garden after he had sinned: "Where are you Adam?" In both cases God already knew the answer but He wanted the person to whom He was speaking to do some introspection.

Renewal (I Kings 19:15-18).

I do not believe there is anything that will renew the spirit of a person that thinks he/she is washed up like a new responsibility. That is exactly what happened to Elijah. God gave him two coronations and the responsibility of appointing his successor.

"Go back the way you came" is like saying, "whoa, let's backtrack to the place you where you were productive." God wants to get us back on track to do the work that He has set out for us to do. What He has set out for us to do is not "make do work" to keep us busy. It is very important because it is what He wants to accomplish through us. God's work is high priority work.

When you feel defeated and overwhelmed, back up and let God give you another view of the way ahead! It will be invigorating!

Simmons is the pastor of Hebron Church, Grenada.

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THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JANUARY 1 - 15, 2003

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JANUARY 16 - 31, 2003

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Wal-Mart pulls racy magazines

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Wal-Mart has pulled three magazines from its shelves following customer complaints about their racy covers and content. The nation's largest retailer will no longer be selling Stuff, Maxim and FHM — three magazines many pro-family groups believe border on pornography.

The decision came after "listening to our customers and associates," Wal-Mart spokeswoman Melissa Berryhill told The New York Times. "I know we've heard on at least one of those magazines, they weren't pleased with the offering."

Wal-Mart has been under pressure from Christian groups to remove the magazines, the newspaper reported. The Timothy Plan, a pro-family mutual funds management firm, has been pressuring Wal-Mart either to remove Cosmopolitan magazines from check-out lanes or "cover" the often racy covers. Its president, Arthur Ally, said magazines like Stuff, Maxim and FHM can serve as a portal to other forms of pornography.

"It is soft-core pornography," he told The Times. "It's very addictive and leads to harder stuff."

Magazine experts say Wal-Mart carries much clout. "They are extremely important," Dan Capell of Capell's Circulation Report, a newsletter about magazine circulation, told The Times. "They are the largest retailers of magazines and probably the fastest growing."

Wal-Mart also does not sell CDs that carry labels warning of explicit lyrics, The Times reported. Instead, Wal-Mart sells sanitized versions of CDs, with some of them having songs omitted. It already requires proof of age identification for those purchasing video games labeled for mature audiences.

N. American missionaries commissioned

MARIETTA, Ga. (BP) — A group of 57 North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries was commissioned at Johnson Ferry Church in Atlanta May 4, symbolizing the prayer and financial support of both the local church and Southern Baptists across the country.

The missionaries serve in partnership with state conventions and local associations to plant churches, coordinate associational missions efforts, minister amid inner-city poverty, and otherwise work to see individuals come to faith in Christ.

Two missionaries interviewed by Bryant Wright, pastor of the north Atlanta congregation, illustrated the diversity of the group.

Britton Elliott is a missions ministry consultant with the Spartanburg (S.C.) County Baptist Network, working to mobilize churches and volunteers for joint missions efforts.

"I speak at our different churches and plan exciting avenues for people to experience the blessings of God through missions," she said. "Churches are eager to do that, but not really sure what to do. So my job is to empower them and equip them to go out and serve God."

Lloyd Byers Jr., meanwhile, serves as director of missions for Guam Baptist Association — the farthest outpost of NAMB's work, located just east of the Philippines.

His job is much the same as that of directors of missions in many pioneer areas, serving as a resource for local churches in recruiting pastors, starting churches, and otherwise presenting a Christian witness to the community.

"It's very interesting, because there are so many nationalities," he said. "Our role is to support the pastors and Disaster Relief forces."

NAMB President Robert E. "Bob" Reccord, speaking during the third service of the morning in the packed sanctuary, chal-



MINISTERING IN MAINE — Ron and Betty Rich share about their work as missionaries in Maine, where Ron is director of missions for the Maine Baptist Association, during a North American Mission Board commissioning service May 4 at Johnson Ferry Church in Marietta, Ga. (BP photo by James Dotson)

lenged the congregation to respond to God's call on their own lives. Addressing the theme that has come to symbolize NAMB's work, he called on all believers to "answer His call, tell His story, and change your world."

"Every Christian is called by God to be on mission for Him," Reccord said. "You're either going to be a missionary right where you are, or you're going to be a mission field in need of a missionary."

The interesting thing, he said, is that if an individual is faithful to answer His call and tell His story, "you inevitably will change your world."

There are currently more than 5,200 NAMB missionaries. The next commissioning service for newly appointed missionaries is scheduled for Aug. 24 at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita, Kan.

Graham, singers crusade for Christ in San Diego

SAN DIEGO (BP) — Christian artists Third Day and Michael W. Smith helped launch Billy Graham's Mission San Diego evangelistic campaign with a crowd of 54,000

May 8 at Qualcomm Stadium.

"It's an honor to be part of it," Third Day lead singer Mac Powell told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Smith added patriotic fer-

vor to the evening when he waved a large American flag on stage in support of U.S. troops. "I love this country!" Smith shouted prior to singing America the Beautiful.

The 84-year-old Graham, in typical fashion, turned the evening heavenward. After a standing ovation spanning several minutes, ASSIST News Service reported that the evangelist spoke of the war in Iraq — the San Diego area provided one-fifth of the Iraq fighting force — the SARS epidemic, the ongoing battle against AIDS, and the tornadoes that had devastated parts of the country.

"Not in my lifetime have I seen so many problems," ASSIST quoted Graham as saying.

Citing his own fragile health, including Parkinson's disease, and his wife Ruth's health — she is now bedridden at their home in Montreat, N.C. — Graham then spoke of mortality.

"All of us here are going to die," ASSIST quoted Graham as saying. "In the next 60 or 70 years, almost everybody in this stadium will be gone."

At the end of his 30-minute sermon, again in typical fashion, Graham asked his audience to "get up out of your seats" and commit their lives to Jesus Christ. More than 3,100 people came forward in response to Graham's invitation, ASSIST reported.



PROUD TO BE AMERICAN — Vocalist Michael W. Smith, in a tribute to U.S. troops, waved an American flag and sang America the Beautiful on the opening night of Billy Graham's Mission San Diego evangelistic campaign. (BP photo by Tobin Perry)